

# Internship at Benh Vien Nhi Dong 2 in Sài Gòn City

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## A Wonderful Opportunity and More

My name is Dieu Thao Le Nguyen and I am majoring in Biological Engineering with a biomedical emphasis and I am pursuing the premedical track. I have always loved the Vietnamese language as well as its culture. Thus, when the time came to find an internship, I contacted the Vietnamese program of UGA Comparative Literature Department hoping to find a medical internship in Vietnam so I could further my understanding of the Vietnamese language as well as to gain a deeper insight of the medical field. Fortunately, I was introduced to the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City, that provided a medical internship in Vietnam at one of the most prestigious pediatrics hospital in Vietnam, Benh Vien Nhi Dong 2 in Sài Gòn City. With their help I interned at Benh Vien Nhi Dong 2 in the summer of 2015. For the four weeks that I was there, I was in a rotation with other medical students. I visited four departments: primary care, cardiology, infectious disease, and the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit). I also observed a surgery and had brief exposure to the psychology department.



In each department, my group and I interacted with patients, asked about their medical history, talked to their family members, and after finding what symptoms they had, we came up with certain diagnoses that we would then discuss during the breakout sessions. The doctors made rounds and we followed them and observed how they checked the patients and what diagnosis they made. During breakout sessions, we split into sub groups where we discussed the

case studies assigned to us, came up with a diagnosis and explained our reasoning. This internship was definitely an eye-opening experience because not only did I work with doctors and patients, but I also learned about the environment and the culture. There are three major pediatrics hospitals in Vietnam, with one located in Hanoi and the other two in Saigon City. Due to the limited facilities, there are many patients in these hospitals. In the NICU, there are only about 30 beds for the infants but sometimes I saw 70-100 infants and it was a matter of accommodating the needs and making the best of the situation. Being in this environment taught me how we take our hospitals and facilities for granted because in America we take privacy very seriously; however, in Vietnam there were cases where more than 10 infants were placed in the same room with family members because in times of need, privacy is sacrificed in favor of capacity. During my internship, I had two very memorable experiences. During my time in the infectious disease department, I saw a patient who had just turned 12 and was in the last stage of HIV. He was so thin and fragile and it was heartbreaking to see his pain. That very same day, I saw another child who had dengue fever, a disease quite common in tropical areas, who coughed up blood and was unconscious. Seeing these young children suffering was the hardest thing I had to endure. This internship had reassured my goals of attending medical school so that one day I can return to this country and contribute to its healthcare. I learned a lot and had a wonderful experience, thanks to the efforts of Co Trang, the Vietnamese program of the Comparative Literature Department at UGA, and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City for giving me such a wonderful opportunity.



(My group, full of hardworking and compassionate people that I will forever be grateful to have met.)

Below are pictures during my internship and the wonderful memories I have captured:



On the left is the room where we held breakout sessions; on the right is the daily walk home from class when we discussed assignments and interesting things happening in our lives. Our group was a big family and we bonded through eating the famous banh mi right before class started or grab a drink from a café nearby.



The woman on the left is on the path to becoming an anesthesiologist and we both got the chance to observe the surgery conducted with the help of a medical professor from the University of Chicago.



Every day I visited these little infants and it is a happy thought to know that they are in good care. In the time I was there, I was able to see two of the children get surgery and recovery successfully.

(All photos were taken with the permissions of the parents.)